

In the Claims:

The following listing reflects amendments to the claims and replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

1-44. (Cancelled)

45. (New) An isolated and purified polynucleotide which encodes a fusion protein consisting essentially of an NS3, an NS4, an NS5a, an NS5b and a core polypeptide of an HCV.

46. (New) A composition comprising:

- (a) the isolated and purified polynucleotide of claim 45; and
- (b) a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

47. (New) The composition of claim 46 wherein the polynucleotide is DNA.

48. (New) The composition of claim 47 wherein the polynucleotide is in a plasmid.

49. (New) A method of activating T cells which recognize an epitope of an HCV polypeptide, comprising the step of:

contacting T cells with the polynucleotide of claim 45, whereby a population of activated T cells recognizes an epitope of the NS3, NS4, NS5a, NS5b or core polypeptides.

50. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the T cells are obtained from a mammal selected from the group consisting of a mouse, a baboon, a chimpanzee, and a human.

51. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein the mammal is infected with an HCV.

52. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein the mammal is not infected with an HCV.

53. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the population of T cells comprises CD4⁺ T cells.

54. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the population of T cells comprises CD8⁺ T cells.
55. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the T cells comprise CD8⁺ and CD4⁺ T cells.
56. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the step of contacting further comprises contacting the T cells with an adjuvant.
57. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the polynucleotide is DNA.
58. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the polynucleotide is RNA.
59. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein the T cells are in a mammal.
60. (New) The method of claim 59 wherein the mammal is selected from the group consisting of a mouse, a baboon, a chimpanzee, and a human.
61. (New) The method of claim 60 wherein the mammal is infected with an HCV.
62. (New) The method of claim 60 wherein the mammal is not infected with an HCV.